

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, from September 30, 1878, to October 4, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Edinburgh, Sunday, September 30th., 1878 (probably 1878). My dear Mrs. Bell:

Here I am writing what is probably my last letter to you from Europe in Edinburgh. This is how it comes we are here. I must have told you of the new school for the deaf Alec and a Greenock gentleman were trying to start in that place and how Alec had sent for one of his pupils to come from America and start it. Well, the man promised to come and we waited and waited until the last of August, then Alec gave him up and cabled to Mr. Jones, another pupil, and while awaiting his arrival went to Greenock himself and with Miss True's aid started and carried on the school until little more than a week ago Mr. Jones arrived having left at once on the telegraphic notice. Baby and I joined Alec two weeks ago and Friday we left Greenock and came here. Tonight or Tomorrow night we leave for London and then Alec starts for Paris. Max Muller has written to know if Alec will remain until the 26th., if it can be arranged to ask him to lecture at Oxford. Alec answered "perhaps so." He is most anxious to remain but Mamma dreads delay for My Sister and for Elsie so I presume we shall return on the 12th., as we expected.

Thank you very much for your kind letters. We shall make as long a visit as we can, but we hardly think we could stay over Christmas, though Alec might come to you for it. I have not spoken to Miss Home about going to Canada and so do not know what she will say. She has never dined with us so will not expect to take her meals with you. She helps in the kitchen but has also a housekeepers room and her own room I don't expect her to help me on the voyage. Elsie is too heavy for her now at all events, but all of my family are good sailors and I don't think Elsie will be thrown on any strangers hands. She sits in my lap as

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I write busily tearing a piece of paper to pieces, poor little thing her beauty is sadly spoilt just now by three bloody scratches on the tip of her little nose. Friday morning while getting ready to leave 2 Greenock I put her on the sofa corner and left her to Alec's and Mr. Jones' care. Well Alec looked at her every now and then and put the pillow between her and the edge but presently he heard a thump like a sledge hammer he says and there was the baby on the floor. Fortunately she escaped with only these scratches not a black and blue spot to be found though how she could do it I cannot understand. Nor can we guess how she could have managed to roll over for she cannot move very much yet.

Alec spent all yesterday hunting up his friends but does not seem to have been very successful in finding them at home. He wanted very much to go down to your country place today, but it is a horrible damp, foggy, chilly, rainy day and (I cannot find words enough to express my feeling of it—) and all his ardour has died out of Alec.

Tomorrow we go to Moffat I believe. I have set my heart on getting cairngorm or two to take home with me or we might take this evenings train home. Elsie is a beautiful traveller. Anne and I came on alone by night train and the little darling slept all through the night only waking a short time before reaching Coatsbridge where Alec was waiting for us. Mrs. Berthwick the mother of one of the little deaf Greenock children gave baby a pretty silver mug, another lady is going to make her a regular scotch dress. I don't suppose she can wear it at present but such things are always in fashion and it will keep. Thank you the little dress you have made for her It could not have been her first short dress at all events for she left off her long robes a month ago, and very pretty she looks in her short ones.

London, October 4th., I am sorry my letter did not go before but send it now that you may see that we did think of you in Edinburgh. Alec went to Mr. Pase' Sunday evening, one of the daughters was married a year ago and has a little boy, she was very ill of brain fever a day after her confinement. Alec also saw Mrs. Ross she was confined a fortnight 3 ago and was going out to walk the next day. Elsie was four weeks old before I went out, and then only in a carriage.

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We saw Mr. Richardson behind his counter as of old, and Monday Alec brought his cousin's old nurse up to see Elsie, she thought her like Alec's brother Edward. Mr. Herdman Alec's old teacher and some other gentleman also came but we did not have time to go to Moffat but had to come straight home Monday evening. And now I have some news for you which I am not sure you will quite like. We have given up our passage on the "Abyssinia" for the 12th., and are going directly to Halifax by an Allan Line Steamer leaving on the 31st. Mamma and my sisters have made all their arrangements and think they must go on the 12th., but it is a pity for Alec to give up this chance of lecturing at Oxford and Mamma thinks he had better remain. It will be very much cheaper in every way for us to go by the Allan Line and since we must part company I am very much pleased by the change. After all I think we shall be with you almost as soon as if we were to sail earlier. Will you object to receiving a little dog into your household? Alec and Mamma are in town looking for one for me. Sister bought a lovely little Yorkshire terrier this morning and I set my heart on it's little mate, but while we were looking at another litter a man came along and bought him. Sister's was secured for a quarter of an hour or she would have lost hers too. Very happy she is now resting on the bed with her baby beside her. She is very much stronger than when I left and able to go about a great deal. We went to Lendenhall Market after her dog, and yesterday we searched the "The seven dials".

My nurse Annie has definitely decided to remain with us and very well satisfied we are at it. Miss Home has not decided. Alec told her to think over it but he seems to think she will go too. Mr. Home has been 4 making himself very agreeable to my family in our absence, calling almost every evening. Today he has taken Berta to Brighton for the day. He has already shown her over the Tower, and has tried to help Mamma in her shopping. Mrs. Home has a bad cold and is very busy with workmen in her house so we have not seen her.

They couldn't find my dog so perhaps your hospitality may not be taxed.

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With much love to Mr. Bell, Believe me, Affectionately, May Bell.